

## Meeting not Me-eating

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### Introduction

Meetings often elicit a love-hate relationship among both employee and management. They often have to deal with meetings in or outside the organization. At times, employees spend two or more hours in a single meeting, leaving less time to focus on their core responsibilities. When people attend too many meetings in one day, it's natural for them to feel mentally drained, leading to what's often called meeting fatigue. As the day goes on, they might start tuning out, going along with others just to wrap things up faster, or simply daydreaming instead of staying engaged. This lack of energy and focus can make it harder for meaningful conversations to happen and can weaken the overall quality of decisions made in those meetings. Their mental energy is depleted because they feel exhausted. It will contribute to the final discussion or decision of the meetings. According to Mroz et al. (2018), a meeting can be defined as three or more individuals coming together to discuss a work-related matter. Even if a meeting is not well planned, lacks clear direction, or is not effectively led, it still needs to happen and people are still expected to show up because it plays a key role in making thoughtful decisions that move the organization forward. To avoid so-called "me-eating," organizations must deliberately focus on structured planning (DeLuca, 1983; Allen, Beck, Scott, & Rogelberg, 2014). Effective leadership is essential to guide discussions and keep participants engaged (Allen & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2016). Thoughtful execution ensures that every meeting adds value and drives meaningful outcomes (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Belyeu, 2016).

### Meaningful Meeting Requires Strong Structured Planning

Excessive and poorly managed meetings can overwhelm employees, diminish productivity, and obstruct focused work. Therefore, meetings should be structured and planned from the outside. This supports DeLuca's (1986) view that meetings are vital tools within organizations, but their

effectiveness depends on proper planning and strong leadership. Similarly, Allen et al. (2014) highlight that meetings serve as a critical foundation for planning and must be purposefully structured to fulfil their objectives. Thus, the meeting should address the “who” by identifying all key participants, the attendees, the chairperson, and the secretary. Additionally, it should also specify where: the place of the meeting and the seating arrangement of the meeting. The What should clearly define the purpose of meeting and the agenda items to be discussed. By looking at the 4Ws question, the organization can select the right meeting format, participants, and structure. In addition, the notice of meeting and agenda must be sent early to ensure that participants are aware of what to expect (Deluca, 1986; Allen et al., 2015). Furthermore, the time of the meeting should be allocated 1-2 hours only, strategically scheduled, to optimize time management and prevent meeting overload (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2016).

### **Effective Leadership as a Cornerstone of Meaningful Meetings**

Across the literature, effective leadership consistently emerges as a critical component of successful workplace meetings. Mroz et al. (2018) emphasize that leadership in meetings is context-specific and not necessarily tied to organizational rank. Thus, the Chairman should have full knowledge of the meeting's rules and meeting purpose Mroz et al. (2018) emphasize to conduct the meeting properly. The Chairman should demonstrate firm and assertive leadership so they can facilitate discussion, clarify objectives, and promote engagement during the meeting. Similarly, Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2016) and Perlow et al. (2017) highlight that the Chairman should set the rules during the meetings so that the agenda is followed and distractions from unproductive discussions are minimized. Thus, Deluca (1983) and Allen et al. (2015) It is important for the Chairman to follow up with the person responsible to ensure that action has been taken.

### **Meaningful Meetings Require Thoughtful Execution**

Even with solid planning and competent leadership, meetings must be executed thoughtfully to achieve their intended results. According to Deluca (1983), meetings should have a clear purpose and structure, with defined roles and responsibilities. Allen et al. (2015) concur, asserting that successful meetings involve setting agendas, assigning roles, and experimenting with different formats to promote participation.

Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2016) also highlight the need for leadership training to improve execution and participant engagement. The authors recommend regular evaluations of meeting effectiveness to support continuous improvement. In the post-COVID-19 era, thoughtful execution has become even more critical, especially with the rise of hybrid and virtual meetings. Standaert, Muylle, and Basu (2022) stress that technological tools such as video conferencing, screen sharing, and presence features should be adopted strategically, only when they genuinely contribute value to the meeting process.

In addition, Allen et al. (2014) emphasize that execution should align with the specific purpose of the meeting, whether it involves decision-making, problem-solving, or staff development. Effective execution includes managing time, staying on task, and minimizing distractions. Building on this, Krocsis, de Vreede, and Briggs (2015) propose the use of “thinkLets”, codified facilitation techniques that guide group collaboration through structured steps such as idea generation, evaluation, and consensus-building. These techniques ensure meetings are not only well-managed but also produce tangible outcomes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in a fast-paced and increasingly virtual work environment, meetings remain a vital part of an organization. Meeting effectiveness relies on three critical components: structured planning, effective leadership, and thoughtful execution. Disorganized and unplanned meetings is not only waste time but also reduce employee engagement and overall productivity. With good planning, such as setting a clear agenda, defining roles, and allocating appropriate time, meetings can transform from routine obligations to valuable collaboration tools. Furthermore, leaders play a critical role in guiding the process, reinforcing positive behaviors, and fostering a culture of participation during meetings. Leaders must also continually evaluate and adapt meeting practices to meet the evolving needs of their teams. In addition, thoughtful execution is essential to ensure that well-planned and well-led meetings deliver results. This includes strategically leveraging technology, especially in hybrid and virtual settings, to enhance rather than hinder communication and engagement. Post-pandemic, organizations can adopt a more appropriate approach to meetings so that they can be powerful vehicles for decision-making, innovation, and team alignment, drivers of organizational success.

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